



Chesterfield County, Virginia

Memorandum

DATE: OCTOBER 9, 2003
TO: CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: THOMAS E. JACOBSON, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING *Tom*
SUBJECT: REGULATING THE AESTHETICS OF RETAINING WALLS

BACKGROUND:

Due to the increased use in the County of retaining walls, specifically stacked block wall, the Planning Commission asked staff to provide preliminary research on the subject of regulation of the appearance of retaining walls. The research involved benchmarking with other communities and explores their approach to this issue.

RESEARCH:

Five municipalities were called, and members of their planning staff (or equivalent) were queried. In brief the responses were:

- Hanover County – no regulation of appearance.
- Henrico County – appearance addressed case by case for projects going before a public hearing by using landscaping, architectural appearance of materials, and/or terracing.
- Albermarle County – appearance addressed case by case for reviews in certain high profile districts by using landscaping, architectural appearance of materials, and/or terracing.
- James City County – appearance addressed case by case for those projects going before their Development Review Committee and can include using landscaping, architectural appearance of materials used, and/or terracing.
- Cary, North Carolina -appearance is strictly controlled through their architectural compatibility requirements (similar to Chesterfield County's) except that their ordinances require retaining walls to be architecturally compatible with buildings. As an example, this can extend to brick buildings having brick retaining walls or concrete walls that are stamped and painted to look like brick. If the building is split face block, then the stack walls need to be of same color and texture.

CONCLUSION:

Other communities are beginning to address the appearance of large retaining walls. The primary methods appear to be by adding landscaping, having the wall materials be of a similar color and texture to the buildings, and terracing, or a combination of the options.